

Statement for the Record
Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
H.R. 414, Ft. Wainwright Land Lease or Conveyance Act
March 6, 2014

The Department of the Interior appreciates the opportunity to submit a Statement for the Record on H.R. 414, a bill to authorize the continued lease or eventual conveyance of 76 acres of withdrawn Federal land located within the boundaries of Fort Wainwright Military Reservation in Fairbanks, Alaska. The Department of the Interior defers to the Department of the Army as to whether the lands should be retained in federal ownership in support of the military mission at the Fort Wainwright Military Reservation.

Background

In 1937, federal lands on the outskirts of Fairbanks, Alaska, were withdrawn by Executive Order 7596 for military purposes at the Fort Wainwright Military Reservation. Of these withdrawn lands, 76 acres were later made available for military housing.

It is our understanding that in 1987, the Department of the Army (Army) entered into a "build-to-lease" contract for the construction of 400 housing units, and associated roads, parking areas, and parks, on these 76 acres. The Army entered into two lease agreements with the developer. One was a "housing lease", in which Army agreed to fill the housing units with Army personnel and their families for the 20-year term of the lease. The housing agreement expired in 2007, and it is our understanding that it was not renewed. The units are currently offered for lease to the general public and the property is managed by a private company. The second Army lease agreement was a "ground lease" for 76 acres of land withdrawn by E.O. 7596 on which the housing units and the supporting infrastructure were constructed. The land is leased by the Army to the developer until 2018.

H.R. 414

H.R. 414 would give the Secretary of the Army the discretion to extend a ground lease on the 76 acres in the Fort Wainwright Military Reservation, for one or more 15-year terms. If the Secretary of the Army elects not to extend the ground lease, H.R. 414 directs the Secretary of the Army, with the concurrence of the Secretary of the Interior, to sell the 76 acres out of federal ownership unless the Secretary of Defense determines that retention and military use of the 76 acres is in the national security interests of the United States. H.R. 414 requires an appraisal of the land prior to conveyance, and requires the purchaser to pay the appraised value to the Secretary of the Army. The bill requires the purchaser to pay all costs of the conveyance.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) understands that the Army does not support H.R. 414 because it intends to continue using these 76 acres of withdrawn lands for military purposes. BLM defers to the Army regarding that determination. If, at a future date, the Army determines that these 76 acres of withdrawn lands are no longer needed to support the military mission at the Fort Wainwright Military Reservation, the BLM would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on procedures for its disposition.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this Statement for the Record.